



hotel riverview - bengaluru



cultural synergy: ar. siraj hasan

With over 23 years of experience in the industry, Siraj & Renu Architects & Interior Designer have developed a specialization in the hospitality segment. Aesthetics, functionality and economics are three major factors that are woven into their design philosophy. Ar. Siraj Hasan, an architecture graduate from the Jawaharlal

Nehru Technological University, Hyderabad, developed an interest in design during his early years in school. "My father was in the army; however, my family has a strong architectural background. I enjoy art in any form, but with the influences present at home, my art was channelized into architecture."

the husband-and-wife team of siraj and renu combines the skills of both architect and interior designer, in this multi-disciplinary consultancy.



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establishment

Architecture in the mid seventies was an uncommon profession. To overcome this barrier Ar. Siraj Hasan stepped first into furniture manufacturing, with a focus on Scandinavian design in the initial years post graduation. His entry into the hospitality segment was initiated by Ramoji Rao, a business man and media entrepreneur who was also the Chairman of the Dolphin Group of Hotels in Andhra Pradesh. "I was commissioned by Ramoji Rao to create a certain space at the Dolphin Hotel, Visakhapatnam, I eventually acquired the entire project. It was a great opportunity to work on a four star accredited hotel and this project became a stepping stone in our practice. It led us to a lot of other projects in Visakhapatnam." While the locus of the firm's interior design practice eventually became hotels and hospitality, their architectural practice consists of a broad spectrum of work including residential, commercial, hospitality and institutional projects.

During the mid eighties Hyderabad was not yet able to generate a demand for architectural services, inspiring Ar. Siraj to move to Bengaluru. "We started working with the United Breweries Group for Vijay Mallya and designed apartments for them. Bangalore had a high level of awareness in those days which Hyderabad lacked. I realised that Bangalore was the place!" he says. Over the years, the Hyderabad market opened up to architects and interior designers, and while incorporating the city into his practice, Ar. Siraj has more recently decided to diversify to Chennai.

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projects

Ar. Siraj Hasan has worked on several projects with developers, doing commercial offices and exclusive apartments and boasts of clients such as Godrej and the late Feroz Khan. The firm has designed several hotels for the Appaswamy Group of Companies, starting with the Residency Hotel, Coimbatore in 1997, followed by The Residency Towers in Chennai, a four star accredited hotel with 176 rooms. "People at times have the misconception that I have only designed Bikes & Barrel, the pub at The Residency Towers and not the entire hotel itself," chuckles Ar. Siraj Hasan. He also has resorts such as the 27 acre Oceans Spray Resort, with a 5 acre artificial water body, near Puducherry, to his credit.

Siraj & Renu Architects & Interior Designer have also worked on the Starwood's Aloft chain in Chennai, Coimbatore, Bengaluru, Chandigarh and Ahmedabad, and the Starwood Sheraton, Hyderabad in collaboration with an Indonesian architect. "We are handling the design coordination and development for the project and are closely working with landscape architects to ensure that the design intent remains in line with our thinking. **An architect is the captain of the ship and the interior designer, landscaper and other consultants are steered by the concept and design of the architect.** We don't call the shots but we definitely have the upper hand." Ar. Siraj finds designing pubs a personal favourite and is proud of his designs for Ten Downing Street located in Hyderabad, Pune, Chennai and Nagpur. The firm's other on-going projects include the Muse Hotel and a 200 room five star deluxe for the Mövenpick chain of hotels in Chennai.



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design inspirations

Ar. Siraj believes that **inspiration is the manifestation of aptitude, and that the latent talent possessed by every individual is exposed given the right environment.** Socrates said, 'I know that I am intelligent, because I know that I know nothing'; Ar. Siraj lives by this motto and is of the opinion that life is a continuous learning process.

Design is always for a specific need; **inspiration does not depend on the design, it depends on functionality.** "The inspiration for interior design stems from the specific client need. When I design for a client I am not only his architect but also function as his legal and marketing executive and his future customer. In order to sell a space it needs to clear all the legalities involved, it should also be financially viable. For instance, the ratio of revenue and non-revenue generating areas in a hotel has to be logically considered. As an artist I can design massive lobbies, however, the grand space may not enable the client to earn any revenue." The focus on green architecture has also inspired several changes in design. At Siraj & Renu, the use of natural sustainable and recyclable materials along with the apt use of natural resources has long been practiced. "We employ recycling of water in every project; it is a prerequisite by the Ministry of Environment," adds Ar. Siraj.

Deriving inspiration from his work, Ar. Siraj feels every project presents a designer with a host of opportunities and challenges without which a design would not seem complete. He believes that the client brief is the bible to any design, with ideas and designs line tuned to the requirements and budget of the project while ensuring that the final product is indeed of good quality. "I am here to design and my level of interest remains constant whether the space is a small 2000 sq. ft. home or a 200,000 sq. ft. hotel. Work is primarily a passion for me, it is my high!"



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future of architecture

Architecture in India is at a crossroad, and Ar. Siraj encourages free thinking and discussion, to grow the creative frontiers of the practice, believing that an aptitude and a sense for design, with training enables good design. "Learning in a closed environment with books is insufficient; one needs to absorb what is around them. I encourage my trainees to explore the work that others have done, to question why it is done in a particular way, and to examine if other possibilities of creating the same space exist. Discussions and debates play a major role in the learning process."

In his two terms as Chairman of the Indian Institute of Interior Designers; Ar. Siraj Hasan has come across many talented people who he believes are the future of the industry. He shares his faith in the future of the profession saying, "If I were to advise my son on his career choice, architecture would be my first preference, there is tremendous scope in the industry!" ifj